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on  
Zionist Raid on  
Iraqi Reactor

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## **Preface**

President Saddam Hussein was interviewed on 28 June 1981 by Barbara Walters of the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) TV network.

The interview largely focused on 'Israel's' recent aggression against the Iraqi nuclear reactor on 7 June 1981. It also referred to Iraqi-American relations in particular and to Arab-American relations in general.

In this interview, President Hussein explained Iraq's position on various aspects related to this aggression — [Iraq's] development programmes, its attitude towards the International Atomic Energy Agency regulations and its view of the Arab-Zionist conflict with regard to the Arabs' aspirations to scientific and technical development.

**The Editor**

***Interviewer:*** Is there anything particular you wish us to convey? This is your first interview on American TV. If there is something particular you want us to know I shall be happy to include it.

***President Saddam Hussein:*** Nothing except conveying the truth to the people.

***Interviewer:*** Your Excellency, I think that women in our country will be interested in knowing what the conditions of women are in this country [Iraq]. I know you have tried to involve them in many activities and to provide equal education. Perhaps you could tell us a bit more about the status of women today in Iraq.

***President Saddam Hussein:*** You know that before the Revolution [of 17 July 1968] women in Iraq were in a social and economic situation almost similar to that of women in Third World countries generally. But now the position of women has changed con-



siderably, not in terms of gradual and relative progress but rather the change has been substantial.

Throughout its long history, the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party has endeavoured to enlighten women as to the significance of their integration with men in all human, political and social aspects. Furthermore, Iraqi laws have guaranteed a new status for women. Those laws were enacted in a way enabling [women] to occupy their new position in society. A foreign visitor to Iraq can feel this substantial development in the position of women in all aspects.

*Interviewer:* Your Excellency, in the past week, in your speech before your Cabinet, you said that Iraq had learnt important lessons as a result of the 'Israel' attack on the nuclear plant — lessons that you would put into action. Can you tell us what these lessons are?

*President Saddam Hussein:* You know that 'Israel' attacked Baghdad despite the fact that Iraq is not militarily or geographically adjacent to it. This obviously means that 'Israel' is psychologically and actually prepared to launch aggression against us at any moment. So we cannot reveal the many military lessons we have derived from this attack. They are for us and for the Arabs who would like to take advantage of them.



As for other lessons, the most important is that it has become almost clear to all Arabs, including Iraqis, that 'Israel' is not a group of Jews, whether of Palestinian or other origins, seeking a refuge after their persecution under the Nazis. Rather, it is an aggressive entity which does not hesitate to launch acts of aggression against the Arab nation whenever it has the technical ability.

Thus the 'Israeli' aggression against the Arab nation was not an act of self-defence. Rather, it was a premeditated act of aggression aimed at maintaining superiority for ['Israel's'] aggressive existence. The intentions of this aggression need not be questioned. They have long been settled and established in the minds of 'Israeli' rulers and their backers.

So whenever 'Israel' has the technical requirements of aggression it will commit it against any Arab country. This was clearly demonstrated by its aggression against Iraq, which has no army on 'Israel's' borders. This, in fact, is the main lesson whose implications and details will no doubt preoccupy us. In the light of this lesson, we shall make our calculations in the future — in economics, for instance, and in other fields.

*Interviewer:* Your Excellency, have you had any



communication direct from President Reagan since the 'Israeli' attack?

*President Saddam Hussein:* We have briefed the American Chargé d'Affaires, among other heads of diplomatic missions in Baghdad, on our position and on the aggression which took place. That is all.

*Interviewer:* Do you have a message for the United States? Since this is your first American television interview, is there something particular you want our people to know?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Yes, I have a message. It is that every American citizen has to consider the ['Israeli'] raid on Baghdad independently from what he hears either from the Arabs or from the Zionist lobby. Then he has to question himself scientifically and ask the American nuclear scientists themselves whether this reactor was of the type which can produce atomic bombs. He has also to ask them whether Iraq's economic and technical situation could afford the production of a nuclear bomb in this reactor, or whether this reactor is for the development and construction of our country in order to bypass the stage of the developing or backward countries. Furthermore, he has to ask himself whether 'Israel' has any right whatsoever to destroy an economic and scientific centre just because it



believed that this centre might in the future develop Iraq's technical means. This, he should remember, happened at a time when 'Israel' possesses atomic bombs — according to the testimony of many Western atomic experts — and refuses to sign the treaty for the non-proliferation of atomic weapons and to open the doors of its laboratories for international inspection, while Iraq is a signatory of that treaty and has opened the doors of its laboratories for international inspection.

After all, the raid was carried out with developed American weapons — superior to those of the Arabs. Hence, the American citizen should ask himself whether it is possible to maintain good relations with the Arabs, while the American Administration has long adopted a biased attitude in favour of 'Israel' politically and militarily and in terms of economic, financial and scientific aid. How could the United States maintain relations which secure its legitimate interests in the region if it is considered by the Arabs an all-time accomplice in the aggression?

*Interviewer:* I would like to ask you first about your speech this week to your Cabinet, in which you called on all peace-loving nations to help the Arabs gain the atomic bomb, so that they can confront the



'Israeli' atomic bomb. These were your words. Does this mean, Mr President, that Iraq will now try to make an atomic bomb itself?

*President Saddam Hussein:* This was not the basic topic of our talk at the Cabinet meeting. It came only as a side point and a comment on the issue. Nor did I address the countries of the world to provide the Arabs with the means of acquiring the atomic bomb.

What I said precisely was that when 'Israel' possesses the atomic bomb all peace-loving peoples should help the Arabs to acquire such a weapon for the sake of peace — irrespective of the Arabs' intentions and resources. This aid will help redress the imbalance which now exists between 'Israel's' possession of the atomic bomb and the Arabs' lack of any such weapon. It will make 'Israel' hesitate to use its bomb against them.

*Interviewer:* Well, in order to achieve this bomb, would Iraq plan to make it herself? Or would you expect a country to give it you, and if so, which country?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Iraq has always been clear in its programmes. All of these — including the one hit by the 'Israeli' air force — are oriented towards developing Iraq's scientific and technical



means, with a view to achieving quicker and better development. We in the Iraqi leadership have never considered the issue of acquiring a nuclear bomb — by production or other means — either for Iraq or for others.

*Interviewer:* Has this raid changed your view?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Not at all. Basically this is our view. Yet when we feel an imminent danger posed by 'Israel' to the Arab nation, we will let the Iraqis' minds operate to the maximum, and try by every possible means to protect ourselves.

*Interviewer:* I am not sure I understand. So may I ask you for the record if your nuclear reactor was capable in the past, or will be capable in the future, of making an atomic bomb.

*President Saddam Hussein:* Western nuclear scientists — including French and International Atomic Energy Agency scientists — have confirmed that the Iraqi reactor was for peaceful purposes.

*Interviewer:* And will this continue for the future?

*President Saddam Hussein:* If we achieve a contract with any country in the world, then we will continue in the same direction.

*Interviewer:* And not create an atomic bomb?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Do you think there is



any country in the world willing to provide the Arabs with reactors capable of producing an atomic bomb? In the past, the French helped 'Israel' to build the nuclear reactor at Dimona. American expertise was put at 'Israel's' disposal in one way or another to produce the atomic bomb. Yet we believe no world party is ready to help the Arabs in this direction.

*Interviewer:* So you do not think that — even though you asked peace-loving nations to help you acquire the bomb — they would react?

*President Saddam Hussein:* We have not made such a request to any party, neither have we even decided to make such a request.

*Interviewer:* Can you tell us, Your Excellency, what the condition of the reactor is. Is it completely destroyed, as has been reported?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Yes, [it has suffered] serious and extensive destruction.

*Interviewer:* How long do you think it will take before you can rebuild the plant? One estimate has said five years.

*President Saddam Hussein:* At any rate, we are determined to have a similar reactor or a better one with the same orientation, irrespective of time.

*Interviewer:* 'Israel' has said that if you rebuild it will destroy.



*President Saddam Hussein:* Do you think that, after this experience, 'Israel' can destroy this part of our strategic construction? The Iraqis and the Arabs have learnt from this experience that they should bury the most important strategic organs in their economy, scientific bodies and technical requirements, to a degree where they would be immune from even a direct strike with a nuclear bomb. Hence 'Israel' will in the future fail to achieve such a target. This is one of the lessons the Arabs have drawn from the 'Israeli' attack on peaceful installations.

*Interviewer:* Your Excellency, your Foreign Minister, when in our country, said that he had some thoughts that the United States knew of the attack in advance. Is this your view?

*President Saddam Hussein:* If a great power such as the United States — with all its intelligence bodies and its close relations with 'Israel' — did not know of this attack, then it is very serious; and it would be equally serious if it did know about it.

*Interviewer:* Do you think [the USA] did?

*President Saddam Hussein:* There is a big question mark. The information and calculations are so far not in favour of the United States.

*Interviewer:* Mr President, the reasons for sus-



picion that you were making an atomic bomb deal primarily with the size of the reactor, the type of fuel used and the possibility of converting this fuel for atomic weapons. It has been said that your reactor was 40 megawatts, much larger than most research reactors, and larger than was perhaps necessary for nuclear energy research. Further, Mr President, France urged you to accept a type of uranium fuel not suitable for weapons but suitable for nuclear energy. You refused and asked for the fuel that was also suitable for nuclear energy. Had you accepted the other fuel, there would not have been suspicion today. Can you answer these questions that arise in some minds?

*President Saddam Hussein:* You are talking about preconceived ideas which may or may not agree with science. However, regardless of what I say, we go back to the specialist bodies. I clearly said that all Western atomic scientists — the French and the International Atomic Energy Agency, in particular — who referred to the peaceful Iraqi nuclear reactor confirmed that it is not for military ends.

*Interviewer:* The French Foreign Minister said yesterday, Friday, that they may help you rebuild the plant but they will double, triple and quadruple the checks to make sure that there is no doubt in



the future. So there had been some questions.

*President Saddam Hussein:* No matter what he said, there was inspection according to international rules of inspection. If a new international law of inspection is established we shall comply with it and let it be applied to our reactor.

*Interviewer:* Mr President, why did you not strike back immediately, and are you planning any reprisals, any confrontations with the 'Israelis'? For example, Colonel Qaddafi of Libya called for the Arabs to blow up the 'Israeli' reactor. What do you think of this suggestion?

*President Saddam Hussein:* 'Israel' hit our economic installations, although our army is not engaged with it nor does our country border on it geographically. Our rights, however, are known. As for what action we will take against 'Israel', we leave it to the future. This [Iraqi] people cannot forget its enemies. As for how it will act towards them, this will depend on many factors — which we leave to the future.

*Interviewer:* What about Colonel Qaddafi's suggestion?

*President Saddam Hussein:* If President Qaddafi can carry out what he says, we shall bless it.

*Interviewer:* The Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament



called for an oil embargo by all Arab states against the United States, or for the raising of oil prices, or for some direct action against the United States. Is this your view? Are you in agreement with this?

*President Saddam Hussein:* It is the right of the people who suffer aggression to express its indignation, to say the least, against the source of the aggression. You may appreciate the aggression against Baghdad shook the conscience of every Iraqi and every Arab.

The aggression was carried out with American weapons. Thus all anxieties, criticisms and resolutions which express indignation and condemnation are legitimate.

*Interviewer:* But you do not expect realistically an embargo, or the raising of prices, or the taking of Arab funds out of the United States. Those are expressions of hostility, but you do not expect that to be a reality.

*President Saddam Hussein:* We believe that when all the Arabs, and not only one Arab state, are certain of the United States' bias [towards their enemy 'Israel'] they should act unanimously to correct the situation.

*Interviewer:* Can you tell us what your personal reaction was when you first heard of the 'Israeli'



raid?

*President Saddam Hussein:* We had long expected it, not in terms of timing, but rather we expected 'Israel' to launch an aggression with [its] air force against Iraq — its oil plants and its economic installations, including the nuclear centre.

*Interviewer:* Why did you feel that?

*President Saddam Hussein:* 'Israel' is the enemy of the Arabs and we are in the forefront of the Arabs who seek to expose 'Israel' and counter its aggression.

*Interviewer:* Is 'Israel' your greatest enemy?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Yes.

*Interviewer:* One of your [women] officials told me yesterday that she cannot see an 'Israeli' state even if it returns to the 1967 borders; that there must be a secular state for Palestinians, Jews and others, but no state of 'Israel', there must be an end to the state of 'Israel'. Is this your view as well?

*President Saddam Hussein:* I say clearly that the Arabs should not accept to be ruled by 'Israeli' law. At the same time, they should not accept the persecution of any people in the world, including the Palestinian Jews, irrespective of the harm inflicted upon them by 'Israel' — or rather, the so-called state of 'Israel' because we consider it an aggressive



entity.

As regards the future — what this entity will be like, what its potential will be, how the Jews and the Arabs will achieve a co-existence free from aggression, usurpation and persecution — the question is up to the people who will decide.

*Interviewer:* Does Iraq accept United Nations Resolution 242, which gives 'Israel' the right to exist within secure borders?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Iraq rejected this Resolution. You should not make propaganda for the Zionists out of this point. I tell you this: Iraq rejected this Resolution because it neither restores to the Arabs their rights and their usurped territories nor protects them from Zionist aggression. These are the grounds for our rejection of UN Resolution 242.

*Interviewer:* We return to the war between Iraq and Iran. Is this perhaps the time for the two countries to settle their differences, and if so, can you see specific ways of making this happen? There have been various negotiating teams working on it. Do you now see a time and a way to conclude the war?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Iraq was hoping that such a war would not happen, [but this was] not because it feared the future. You know that all the pre-



dictions made by Westerners (including those of American strategists) in assessing Iraq's potential to hold out against nature's factors and the Iranian army were disappointed. We do not fear the future. The war is still going on. But we tend towards peace. So whenever our rights are recognized we will abandon the war and make peace.

*Interviewer:* Does this seem closer?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Now is not the time to dwell upon the Iranian mentality in this respect. What matters is that we shall be very happy to achieve peace whenever there is a chance to do so.

*Interviewer:* I would like to talk about our two countries. Iraq broke off diplomatic relations with the United States at the time of the 1967 'Israeli'-Arab war. The US has said that it would resume diplomatic relations. Now we saw, at the United Nations, co-operation between the United States and Iraq in designing the resolution referring to 'Israel'. I would like to ask, therefore, if you feel warmer towards our country, and when you think we might be able to establish diplomatic relations.

*President Saddam Hussein:* Co-operation in what?

*Interviewer:* The United Nations Resolution on the condemnation of 'Israel'.

*President Saddam Hussein:* It was not co-oper-



ation, but a discussion between the two parties on drafting the Resolution.

*Interviewer:* Can I ask you if you find relations between our two countries closer? Are we closer towards achieving diplomatic relations?

*President Saddam Hussein:* American officials expressed their desire to develop relations, and to be offered a chance to let us feel that they would think about the issues of the Arab nation with a new mentality. So we offered them a chance, by reactivating diplomatic relations through meeting the American Chargé d'Affaires and treating him as the head of a diplomatic mission. This was, of course, based on the principle of reciprocity. We began informing American officials of our views and hearing their own through this link. We also agreed to hold meetings on a political level, despite the severance of relations. These [developments] are, of course, known and have been made public.

*Interviewer:* Your Excellency, President Reagan recently said that he thinks 'Israel' has reason for concern about the possibility of Iraq making a bomb, in view of the past history of Iraq, which has never signed a cease-fire or recognized 'Israel' as a nation, or joined any peace effort towards that end. These are his words.



*President Saddam Hussein:* Was the reason for 'Israel's' aggression [against Iraqi nuclear installations] that Iraq has not signed the Camp David accords (which were called a peace treaty) or the 1948 cease-fire agreement. No, it was not. Iraq is not the only Arab state that did not sign such agreements.

The reason is, rather, that 'Israel' would like the Arabs to remain backward while it retains the long arm of oppressing the Arabs. Thus it launched the aggression against Iraq.

So Mr Reagan is neither just nor accurate — in terms of justice — in this notion.

*Interviewer:* But you have said that 'Israel' is your greatest enemy. So why should they not fear the possibility that you might be making a bomb?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Why don't we, then, have reason to worry because of 'Israel' being our greatest enemy? Didn't 'Israel' make us the greatest enemy? This has been stated by all 'Israeli' officials. Why didn't Mr Reagan say that we have reason to fear 'Israel'?

*Interviewer:* 'Israel' has said that she would not be the country to introduce — that is, to use first — an atomic bomb in the Middle East. If the Arab nations [states] had the atomic bomb, if Iraq had it,



could you imagine that you would be the first?

*President Saddam Hussein:* We say this: if 'Israel' were sincere, let it allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to inspect its reactors and its relevant activities, as Iraq and other Arab countries have done.

*Interviewer:* But if you did possess the bomb, could you see the Arab countries introducing it to the Middle East?

*President Saddam Hussein:* To talk about 'ifs' is not fair because it might incur some sympathy for 'Israel', even if it is not intended to do so. We are talking about a party [Iraq] possessing reactors for peaceful purposes only, and adhering to the International Atomic Energy Agency inspection; while we neglect to talk in the same manner about a party which is not a signatory to the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty, which refuses to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to inspect its reactors and which actually possesses a number of atomic bombs of the type that was dropped on Hiroshima.

*Interviewer:* Your Excellency, this week the 'Israelis' go to the polls to vote for a Prime Minister. Does it matter to you which man, Menachem Begin or Shimon Peres, becomes Prime Minister?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Frankly speaking, it



does not matter to us who comes to this office. What matters to us is the coming of someone who would admit the impossibility of maintaining the usurpation of the Arab rights and territories, and the attempts at blackmailing and enslaving them; and admit the need to seek a new approach to relations, with a new orientation.

*Interviewer:* How?

*President Saddam Hussein:* It is for 'Israeli' officials, and not for Iraq, to say how. We said this through the Arab Summit of Baghdad [1978] which clearly stated the Arabs' objectives.

*Interviewer:* As far as you are concerned, Begin and Peres are the same, as far as Iraq is concerned?

*President Saddam Hussein:* I have no interest in minor details. What matters is the general position — the coming to office of the one who would say that the aggression against the Arabs and the usurpation of their rights and territories must end.

*Interviewer:* Do you think it is possible for the United States to maintain a friendship with both 'Israel' and the Arab states?

*President Saddam Hussein:* In our opinion, if the United States seeks the development of its relations with the Arabs and the maintenance of its legitimate interests, it has to be fair in the attitude towards



the Arab-‘Israeli’ conflict. It is not only the United States which has relations with ‘Israel’. Many states have relations with ‘Israel’, while maintaining at the same time relations with the Arabs — some of which are good. What essentially matters is that the relationship should be fair and not biased.

*Interviewer:* The American Congress seems to be against the selling of Awacs planes to Saudi Arabia. What is your view of this?

*President Saddam Hussein:* We are always for the Arabs’ possession of the necessary means: (a) to deal with others from a technically developed position, which would enable the Arabs to defend effectively their security, sovereignty and future; and (b) to use these means in the interest of their individual countries and of the Arab nation as a whole. It is in this light that we view Saudi Arabia’s possession of any means or equipment.

*Interviewer:* Do you see the ‘Israeli’ attack uniting Iraq with some of the other Arab states with which you have had conflicts? Are you trying to effect a reconciliation with Syria or Libya?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Without going into details, the advantages the Arabs may derive from the lessons of the [Zionist] aggression against Baghdad — whether in their interrelations or in



other issues — could be much greater than the loss they suffered in that aggression.

*Interviewer:* Have you seen that happening, just in the last few weeks: a closing in the ranks of the Arab states and less conflict between them?

*President Saddam Hussein:* The Arabs have certainly reacted to this aggression in a better way than their position was in the past.

*Interviewer:* Will they take any united action?

*President Saddam Hussein:* We are part of the Arabs. So we cannot speak for all the Arabs. Whatever steps they decide on, we are part of them — an active part in the service of the Arab nation.

*Interviewer:* Has the 'Israeli' attack brought you closer to the Soviet Union? You condemned the Soviet Union's intrusion into Afghanistan. Do you now find yourself perhaps moving back closer towards them, if only for defence reasons?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Our relations with the Soviet Union have long been friendly. During recent months the Soviet officials have expressed a desire to maintain and develop this relationship. Similarly, we have expressed the same desire. Obviously, international relations are based on the meeting of interests or the meeting of strategies or the meeting of both.



**Interviewer:** In the long run, who do you see as the greater friend in the Gulf area: the United States or the Soviet Union?

**President Saddam Hussein:** We do not view the Arab homeland or the Arab nation from a point of view based on their division. He who is closer to us is he who is closer to understanding our legitimate interests and our right in life and in the independent construction now and in the future.

**Interviewer:** Your Excellency, since you are a man who sees in the future for your own country, how do you see the Middle East ten years from now?

**President Saddam Hussein:** I can see the Arabs with more developed means and with less vulnerability to minor divisive issues. I can see them with a more developed mentality in politics, economy, technology and science. So they will be much better than they are now.

**Interviewer:** And 'Israel' in ten years?

**President Saddam Hussein:** It will be at the beginning of a historical impasse whereby many people in the world, including the Jews, will come to understand that the continuation of aggression is impossible and that they have to seek a new approach.

**Interviewer:** And in this crisis do you see the Arabs winning?



*President Saddam Hussein:* The gain will not be primarily in the results. It will begin earlier, with the process of choosing the right means and targets which lead to these results.

*Interviewer:* Do you see this 'Israeli' attack on your nuclear plant as a milestone, as a watershed, as the beginning of something very different happening? Does it have great significance in this respect?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Yes, very great indeed. It serves as an indication of the progress of the Arab nation in the direction we mentioned. It also serves as an indicator of the criminal's fear of justice and the investigators' means of discovering his crime and putting him on trial.

*Interviewer:* Mr President, Prime Minister Begin said that he had to strike now, because if he struck later and there had been the making of a bomb, the radiation would kill thousands of people and spread over a wide area. Is that a fact?

*President Saddam Hussein:* You in America — especially the atomic specialists — know that Begin's notion is unscientific. He wanted to provide a humanitarian cover for his crime. But he seems to have failed in presenting this cover.

Scientifically speaking, when a reactor is hit at



any stage of its operation, radiation and pollution will not spread over more than a few square metres — which are within the site of the reactor itself.

Hence it is quite unscientific and inaccurate to claim that the strike on the Iraqi reactor was speeded up by the desire to avert the danger of radiation that would have affected the Iraqis if it had been hit after it was operational.

*Interviewer:* Is there any radiation now at the site?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Yes, there is pollution and radiation at the site of the reactor. But they are under control and are in no way liable to spread at all.

*Interviewer:* How many people were killed in the 'Israeli' attack?

*President Saddam Hussein:* A few Iraqis and a Frenchman — a very small number.

*Interviewer:* How many Iraqis?

*President Saddam Hussein:* I do not remember the figure, perhaps three or four people killed and some wounded.

*Interviewer:* Why do you think Prime Minister Begin struck now?

*President Saddam Hussein:* Because he is an enemy of the Arab nation, and he seems to have made this strike for electioneering purposes. Hence



the timing of the attack. He also used Iran's war against Iraq to facilitate his raid technically.

*Interviewer:* That is all. Thank you.



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الطبعة الانكليزية



حديث السيد الرئيس صدام حسين  
لشركة التلفزيون الأميركية (A.B.C.)  
حول العدوان الصهيوني  
على المفاعل النووي العراقي في ٢٨/٦/١٩٨١

ترجمة: ناجي الحديثي

اصدار: دار المأمون للترجمة والنشر

بغداد - ١٩٨١